terrorism, and strictly adhere to the provisions of the Simla Agreement to which they are a party, including the commitment that neither side shall unilaterally alter the situation and both shall prevent the organisation, assistance or encouragement of any acts detrimental to the maintenance of peaceful and harmonious relations.

The composite dialogue process continued in New Delhi with talks being held from 5—13 November, 1998 on the subjects of Tulbul Navigation Project, Siachen, Sir Creek, Economic and Commercial Cooperation, Terrorism and Drug Trafficking and Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in various fields.

During discussions on Terrorism and Drug trafficking, Government gave Pakistan detailed evidence regarding its role in sponsoring terrorism against India and demanded that this should stop. Government also asked it to close training camps for terrorists, and hand over the terrorists and fugitives from the law who have been given sanctuary in Pakistan.

In discussions on Economic and Commercial Cooperation, the two sides recognised the utility of cooperation in international fora on issues such as the environment and the social clause, and felt the need for enhanced exchange of information on economic and commercial matters. Both sides agreed to hold technical level discussions on the further facilitation of railway traffic between the two countries within the framework of the bilateral agreement on the subject. It was also decided to hold technical discussions on purchase of power from Pakistan. These discussions were subsequently held in Islamabad from 24—27 November, 1998. It has been agreed to continue discussions on the power purchase issue in New Delhi on dates to be decided mutually.

On the subject of Promotion of Friendly Exchanges, the two sides held discussions on visa liberalisation and civilian prisoners. They also agreed that expert level talks would be held to discuss the establishment of a bus service between Delhi and Lahore. Talks on the bus service were held in Islamabad from 1—4 December 1998 and the two side initialled an agreement and protocol on 3 December 1998, providing a framework and an operational mechanism for the bus service. Follow up action will how be taken for signing of the agreement by the two governments.

The two sides also agreed that fishermen who innocently strayed into each other's territorial waters should be released immediately on completion of necessary procedures. 190 Indian fishermen returned to India on November 23, 1998 following these talks.

It was also agreed to hold technical level discussions on the subject of civilian prisoners with the objective of evolving modalities to address this subject effectively.

On the subjects of Siachen, Sir Creek and Tulbul Navigation Project, Government presented reasonable, practical and realistic proposals to Pakistan.

It has been agreed to continue discussions on all the eight subjects identified for the dialogue. In February 1999, the Foreign Secretaries will meet to review the discussions held between 15 October —13 November 1998 and also begin the next round of the composite dialogue process.

US remarks on Jammu and Kashmir

1315. SHRI AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether US Government had repeatedly asserted on the eve of recent Indo-Pak Secretary level talks that Jammu and Kashmir is not an internal matter of India; but had not only regional, but global ramifications; and

(b) if so, Government's response thereto by way of clarifying India's stand to the US and other P-5 countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) US Ambassador to India, Mr. Richard Celeste on October 6, 1998 was reported to have stated "we believe that the only way in which differences between India and Pakistan can ultimately be resolved is through direct bilateral discussions". In response to a question he was reported as having said that "I don't believe that one can view this solely as an internal matter" and that it had "regional and global ramifications".

(b) This was taken up with the United States Government.

On October 7, 1998 the US Embassy in New Delhi stated that US Ambassador's remarks were quoted out of context. On Oct. 9, 1998 US State Department clarified that there was no change in the US policy regarding J&K. Further, it was also stated that Ambassador's remarks were a semantic matter that is not significant from US perspective.

Government have noted the above clarifications.

Denouncement of terrorism in J&K by US President

1316. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during his address on 21st Sept., 1998 to the General Assembly, the President of United States strogly denounced terrorism in the world in general and in Kashmir in particular and urged the world nations to act together to bring pressure on these States to stop this;

(b) what further steps the US have taken to deal effectively with Pakistan which is encouraging and abetting terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir; and

(c) what steps Government propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) In his address on 21st September, 1998 to the General Assembly, US President said that terrorism is a "global problem" and a "clear and present danger to tolerant and open societies and innocent people every where". In this context, he referred to the presence of terrorist elements in Kashmir.

(b) and (c) Goverment have consistently drawn the attention of international community, through bilateral interactions and in multilateral forums to Pakistan's continuing and unabated sponsorship of terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India. This matter has been taken up on a number of occasions with the US authorities. The US side has conveyed that they understand India's concerns and that the US takes a serious view of such terrorist activities. US has also designated the Pakistan based Harkar-U1-Ansar as a terrorist organisation under the US laws.

Cross Border Road Traffic between India and Pakistan

1317. SHRI KHAN GHUFRAN ZAHIDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan and India have agreed to open cross-border road traffic; and

(b) if so, the details of border areas selected for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) An agreement and a protocol, providing a framework and operational mechanism for a bus service between Delhi and Lahore through Attari/Wagha road border for the nationals of India and Pakistan, were initiated and on 3rd December, 1998 by the leader of the Indian and Pakistani delegations following discussions held between the two countries